

THE COLLEGE PROCESS

Submitted by Beth Huppert



**MT. CARMEL HIGH SCHOOL COUNSELING OFFICE
9550 CARMEL MTN. RD.
SAN DIEGO, CA 92129
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WHAT DO COLLEGES LOOK FOR BESIDES TEST SCORES AND GPA?

**INITIATIVE
MOTIVATION
SELF-DISCIPLINE
PERSISTENCE-MASTERY
ABILITY TO OVERCOME HARDSHIP
ENERGY
INTELLECTUAL CURIOSITY
CREATIVITY/RESOURCEFULNESS
SPECIAL TALENT
(EX: MUSIC, DEBATE, DANCE, ATHLETICS)**

**EXTRA ACADEMIC COURSES
(EX: FOUR YEARS OF THE SAME FOREIGN LANGUAGE)**

**ALSO:
STUDENTS WHO ARE FROM RURAL AREAS, FROM LOW SOCIOECONOMIC
BACKGROUNDS AND CULTURAL DIVERSITY**



CHOOSING A COLLEGE CAMPUS

Choosing a college or university is an important and complicated decision. Many factors contribute to the process, but the most important thing is to find a place where you are both comfortable and motivated to do your best. Consider the following factors regarding a college or university's atmosphere and your suitability.

A. Program

1. Does the college offer a good program in your area of interest?
2. Is the faculty qualified, friendly, and supportive?

B. Admission requirements

1. Which specific high school subjects, grade point average, and entrance test(s) are required?
2. When are the application deadlines?

C. Geographic location

1. How close is it to snow, surf, and smog? Is it located in a metropolitan or rural area?
2. How far is it from home? Will travel costs present a problem?

D. Type and size

1. Is it a coeducational, or a men's or women's college?
2. Is it a church-related institution? Does this matter to you?
3. How big is the college? What is the size of the freshman class?
4. How large are the classes? What is the student-to-teacher ratio?

E. Costs and financial aid

1. How much does the institution cost to attend per year? (Request information about tuition, fees, campus housing, books and supplies, transportation, etc.)
2. Is financial aid available? (The more expensive schools usually offer a larger amount of financial aid.)

F. Housing

1. Does the campus guarantee residential facilities?
2. Are there restrictions on off-campus housing for freshman?
3. What is dorm life like? Are residence halls coed?



THE COLLEGE ESSAY

The college essay is a chance to distinguish yourself from your SATs, GPA and AP scores and all those other statistical parts of yourself. It is an opportunity to allow the college admissions officer to get a feel for who you are. There is much more to each of you than mere academic measurements can show. This is your chance to show how you have chosen to spend your time on the planet.

You have approximately 500 words, any 500 words you want, in any order, to explain the wonders of you. Fortunately, most prompts are devised in such a way that you can write about a

topic of your choosing, one that best conveys who you are. Occasionally, a more specific question is asked and you need to adjust your essay to fit that question.

There is no structure to the college essay. It can be a story, a conversation, a list of observations, a detailed overview of the contents of the trunk of your car. It is almost the same as a journal entry. All college essays must either fit the space provided, and the application will tell you exactly that, OR it must fill 1-2 pages. No more. The essay is typed, usually double-spaced, it can be titled, and at the top of each page you should type your name and social security number.

The University of California refers to the college essay as the “Personal Statement”. There are traditionally three prompts. Your personal statement should be a thoughtful, insightful reflection. It should show your creative intelligence at work, putting the reader in touch with the full human behind the test scores and GPA shown elsewhere on the application.

Important points to remember:

1. **Write the essay or personal statement yourself.** College admissions officers read a great deal of essays each year and can usually spot one that has been professionally written from an original student’s work. It is probably a good idea to have a friend, teacher and/or parent provide feedback.
2. **Give yourself plenty of time.** Your personal statement is not something that should be done the night before you mail off your application. Give yourself the time to produce a thoughtful and carefully composed essay.
3. **Follow the rules.** Read all instructions carefully and address one of the prompts given.

*** See your counselor for additional assistance.

CAMPUS VISITS

Visiting prospective college campuses can be a big help in selecting the right college. Hopefully, these suggestions will assist you in planning and evaluating your campus visit.

Purpose of Campus Visits: Visiting a college campus will provide firsthand impressions for you and your family. You will learn about the people, programs and facilities available to you at a particular campus. Students can learn a great deal by meeting with an admissions officer. Your interview with an admissions officer should entail readiness to talk about yourself, your college plans and to seek information about the college and its relationship to you. The exchange of information and the impressions gained on both sides should also provide insight into whether this college is a good match for you.

Some Preliminary Steps:

1. **Make a list.** It is recommended that you consider some of the contributing factors listed on the **Choosing a College Campus** page in order to begin your search. Your initial listing may be quite large with perhaps 15-20 schools. You may want to consult a computer program such as the COIN program in the Sun Center for further assistance.

2. **Do your homework.** You will also want to become familiar with some of the college catalogs. The Sun Center has a variety of college catalogs and videos available for your perusal. Most colleges also have websites that you can browse before your trip. See the Peterson's guide to 4 Year Colleges for college websites.
3. **Narrow your list.** It is traditionally recommended that students narrow their initial listing down to between 6-8 schools. This listing would include 2-3 schools that you are very confident you will be accepted to, 2-3 schools that may be considered mid-range for you and 2-3 that may be considered "reach" schools. This information can be ascertained by looking through entrance difficulty descriptions of schools in the Peterson's guide to 4 Year Colleges. See your counselor for additional assistance.
4. **Schedule your visit.** The next step is to choose your top 3-4 choices and schedule an appointment to visit with each of them. Call for an appointment 2-3 weeks in advance of your planned visit.

Just Before Your Visit:

1. **Reread the catalog.** You will want to focus on the admissions requirements, tuition, scholarship data and programs of study so that you are prepared with questions in advance.
2. **Obtain a copy of your high school transcript and SAT/ACT scores.** Visit the Records Office for an unofficial transcript and a copy of your test scores allowing at least 24 hours notice. A nominal fee is usually required for a transcript.
3. **Bring a comparison chart.** You are about to be inundated with information. Bringing a comparison chart like the following example can be very helpful in keeping track of all of this information.

COLLEGE COMPARISON WORKSHEET

| | College A | College B | College C |
|---|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| 1. Enrollment: Undergrad/Grad | | | |
| 2. Location: Drive time in hours | | | |
| 3. Total Cost:Tuition, room/board | | | |
| 4. Admission Requirements | | | |
| 5. Application Deadline | | | |
| 6. Academic Atmosphere | | | |
| 7. Academic Program Majors | | | |
| 8. % of Commuter Students | | | |
| 9. % of Students Who Graduate | | | |
| 10. Campus Setting:urban/suburban | | | |
| 11. Types of Housing Available | | | |
| 12. Athletic Programs: NCAA/intramural | | | |

| | | | |
|-------------------------------------|--|--|--|
| 13. Application Fee | | | |
| 14. Housing and Tuition Deposits | | | |
| 15. Financial Aid: form and package | | | |
| 16. % of Students Receiving Aid | | | |
| 17. % of Financial Need Met | | | |
| 18. Freshman Classroom Size | | | |
| 19. Parent Opinion of College | | | |
| 20. Your Chances of Being Admitted | | | |
| 21. Your Personal Impression | | | |

Tips On Your Visit:

- ✓ Allow plenty of time to get the feel of the campus. A two-hour visit should give ample opportunity for a fairly extensive tour plus a chat with the admissions office.
- ✓ Always be prompt.
- ✓ Pick up an application form, scholarship form and a campus map.

THE COLLEGE INTERVIEW

The Sequence:

- **Facts** – Be familiar with the college’s catalog.
- **Reason** – Know why you are interested in attending this particular institution.
- **Timing** – Plan to arrive 30-60 minutes in advance.
- **Appearance** – Dress appropriately.
- **Readiness** – Anticipate questions that may arise.

Possible Questions:

- ✓ Why have you chosen this college?
- ✓ What do you hope to gain from a college education?
- ✓ Why are you interested in this particular major?
- ✓ How would you describe yourself?
- ✓ How have you prepared yourself for college?
- ✓ Who is your favorite author and why?
- ✓ If you could change anything about your high school what would it be?

Questions to Ask Admissions Personnel:

- ✓ What are the strongest departments?
- ✓ Must I declare a major when I apply?
- ✓ Would you detail the program in my major interest?
- ✓ How many students are in my preferred major?
- ✓ What types of facilities are available in my major field?

- ✓ Is there a possibility of meeting with a member of that department or sitting in on a class?
- ✓ What is the average class size?
- ✓ Are there internships, co-op, and foreign study available?
- ✓ What is the community setting?
- ✓ What is the college's cultural makeup?
- ✓ Do most of the students commute or live on campus? Are freshman required to live on campus? How are dorm residents' roommates chosen?
- ✓ What percentage of students remain on campus on weekends?
- ✓ What types of extra-curricular activities are available?
- ✓ What percent of applicants are accepted? Is there job placement upon graduation?
- ✓ Does the college accept Advanced Placement credit? How so?
- ✓ What type of scholarships, grants, work study and other financial aid is available

SAT/ACT TESTING

It is recommended that students begin the testing process in the fall of their junior year with the PSAT/NMSQT. The PSAT is a practice test for the SAT. It is an excellent tool because it provides you with specific feedback including which questions were answered incorrectly as well as the correct answers. Juniors are recommended to begin taking the SAT/ ACT during the spring of their junior year. They may repeat either or both of these tests during their senior year if necessary. The SAT I is 50% verbal and 50% math while the ACT is 50% verbal, 25% math and 25% science and social science. Most colleges accept these tests interchangeably although it is always best to check with the colleges in advance.

The SAT IIs are subject area tests which are required only by the University of California schools and by highly selective colleges and universities such as the ivy league schools. Students are required to take the Writing exam, a math exam (based on your current level of performance) and the third test of their choice. The most popular exams are the Literature exam and US History.

Students should probably plan on some level of test preparation. Classes are often offered at the high school campus, adult education office and through local community colleges for a nominal fee.

RECOMMENDED TIMETABLE

| | Fall | Spring |
|----------------|--------------------------------|---|
| Juniors | PSAT/PLAN | SAT I/ACT SAT II (Writing, Math and third test of your choice) |
| Seniors | SAT I/ACT (again if necessary) | |

SAT TEST PREPARATION

Name of Institution: Kaplan SAT/PSAT Prep
Location: RBHS/PHS/MCHS
Hours: Approximately 40 or one 4 hour mini course
Price: \$699.00 for 12 classes/ \$40.00 for mini course
Phone: 1-800-KAP-TEST

Name of Institution: Princeton Review
Location: Poway High School
Hours: Approximately 40 hours
Price: \$695.00
Phone: 1-800-2-REVIEW

Name of Institution: University of San Diego
Location: USD Campus (Linda Vista) or National University Campus (Vista)
Hours: Approximately 26
Price: \$350.00
Phone: 619-260-4579

Name of Institution: Poway Adult Education Center
Location: RBHS
Hours: Approximately 25 hours
Price: \$150.00
Phone: 858-679-2560

Name of Institution: Palomar College
Location: Palomar College San Marcos Campus
Hours: 12 hours and 4 Saturdays
Price: \$119.00
Phone: 760-744-1150

Name of Institution: San Diego State University
Location: San Diego State Campus
Hours: Approximately 9 hours
Price: \$175.00
Phone: 619-594-5152

*****See your counselor for a copy of the Princeton Review's Hit Parade – the 50 most common words seen on the SAT**

COMMUNITY SERVICE

Nearly all college applications include a section for volunteer or community service activities. This is not a section you will want to leave blank. Volunteering your time for a worthy cause is also a great way to “get your feet wet” in an area that you may be interested in studying in college. If you are interested in becoming a doctor, for example, volunteer your time at an area hospital.

Some community service projects such as tutoring students at the elementary school can be available through the Sun Center or anyone of Mt. Carmel’s service oriented clubs such as Key Club. Other opportunities for community service abound through your local church or synagogue, rotary or civic organization, Girl and Boy Scouts, animal shelters, homeless shelters or area museums. Students should keep a log of community service activities in order to make the college application process a smoother one. Here is one example:

| Date | Brief Description of Activity | Length of time you volunteered (hours/days/months) |
|-------------|--------------------------------------|---|
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FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT FINANCIAL AID

❖ **Does every college require the FAFSA?**

Yes! Every college to which you wish to apply for Financial Aid will require the FAFSA. You enter the 6-digit code for each college to which you apply, they will receive your information.

❖ **How do I know which additional forms my colleges require?**

In order to know if there is any additional information that your colleges require, you must check the printed information that the college has sent you directly. In addition, you can check the list of colleges on the PROFILE registration form to see if your college is listed as one that requires you to file the CSS PROFILE.

❖ **What will I receive after I file my FAFSA? How will I know if I made a mistake?**

After completing the FAFSA it is transmitted to the colleges you indicated should receive this information. Approximately 3-4 weeks later you will receive your Student Aid Report (SAR) which is a copy of all of the information you provided on the original form. You must carefully check this information for accuracy, making changes, if necessary. All corrections are returned to the processor. In addition, you may add the names of additional colleges where you would like your information to be sent. There is no charge for this service.

❖ **What will I receive after I file my CSS PROFILE?**

After completing the CSS PROFILE you send it to the CSS processor where your information will be entered into a data base and sent to the colleges which you indicated should receive them – charge is \$15.00 per school. You will then receive a CSS Acknowledgement confirming that your PROFILE form was received and processed and sent to the colleges you indicated.

❖ **Does it matter when I file my forms?**

Yes! Your timing on this is crucial! You may not file the FAFSA until after January 1st but you must file all forms by the Priority Filing Date suggested by your colleges. Most colleges set February 15 or March 1 as priority filing dates. The University of San Diego, however, has set February 1 as their priority date. If you miss the date, a college may not be able to fund you, regardless of your need! File on time to get priority!

❖ **What if I file on time, but do not receive a Financial Aid package that will allow me to attend my chosen college?**

If you receive your Financial Aid package and you and your parents believe it is insufficient, you may appeal the financial aid decision. After discussing your questions on the phone, you must put your request for an appeal in writing and send it to your Financial Aid Officer. There is not guarantee that your package will change, however.

❖ **What if I have an unusual family circumstance and there seems to be no way to explain it either on the FAFSA or on the PROFILE?**

If you have special circumstances, you or your parent should put this information in writing and direct it to the 'Director of Financial Aid' at the colleges to which you are applying. You should do this early in the process – January is preferable – so that your Financial Aid officer has access to this information while working on your financial aid package.

❖ **What if my parents are divorced or separated? Must I file anything special?**

If your parents are divorced or separated, the parent you live with (your custodial parent) should complete your FAFSA and PROFILE forms (if required). If a college requires additional information from your non-custodial parent, you will receive a 'Divorced/Separated' form. Your non-custodial parent is required to complete this form and return it to the college.

SCHOLARSHIPS

Steps for an Effective Search:

1. Check the Scholarship Scoop and Timeline Log in the Sun Center or Civics and Economics classes every week. Use the Scholarship Drawer in the Sun Center to find more information on posted scholarships, including applications.
2. Check through the Scholarship Resource Books in the Sun Center, especially Financial Aids for Higher Education (blue cover). Please do not remove research books from the Sun Center.

3. Contact the Financial Aid Office(s) of the college(s) in which you are interested. Ask about any scholarship programs for freshman.
4. Ask your parents to attend the Financial Aid Night in December or January of your senior year and come with them.
5. Use CollegeView or COIN Computer Programs, or the Internet (fastweb.com) in the Sun Center.

Helpful Hints:

1. Allow two weeks for counselors, teachers or coaches to write a letter of recommendation for you. Please pick up a Personal Data form in the Sun Center.
2. Allow 2 days when requesting a transcript from the Records Office. There is a \$1.00 charge for each official transcript.
3. Look at the application criteria carefully. Apply for every scholarship for which you are qualified, but don't waste your time on those whose requirements you only marginally meet.
4. Be persistent. Actively search throughout the entire year. Most of the local awards are advertised in the spring. Don't give up if you don't receive scholarship money the first time around.

5. Remember that money is available for all types of schooling after high school: 4 year colleges, junior colleges, and private trade and technical schools. Awards can be based on academics, involvement in a community or school activities, need, or a combination of all three. There is something for everyone if you are diligent in your search.

NCAA

To be eligible as a freshman at a NCAA Division I or II college students must be certified by the NCAA Initial Eligibility Clearinghouse. Students should pick up a NCAA Clearinghouse form from the Assistant to the Athletics Director in the administration building. It is essential that you read the NCAA packet that goes along with the form as well. Potential athletes must send the following items to the Clearinghouse beginning in the spring of their junior year:

- Student release form, completed and signed
- Clearinghouse fee
- Official transcript from every high school attended (Students must contact all previous high schools attended and have an official transcript sent to the Clearinghouse)
- Official ACT or SAT scores (These must be ordered from ETS/The College Board either over the phone or on-line)

*****Please see your counselor with additional questions or concerns.**



WEBSITE RESOURCES

Sites for exploring your interests, values and skills

<http://www.collegeview.com/careers/> (Career Planning)
<http://www.collegeboard.org/career/bin/career.pl> (College Board)
<http://www.ucc.vt.edu/stdysk/checklis.html> (Study Skills)

Sites for finding out about careers and jobs

<http://stats.bls.gov/ocohome.htm> (Occupational Outlook Handbook)
<http://www.soicc.ca.gov> (California Job Prospects)
<http://www.jobweb.org> (Job Web)
<http://jobsmart.org/tools/career/spec-car.htm> (Job Smart)
<http://www.stw.ed.gov> (National School-to-Career Opportunities)
<http://www.noicc.gov> (National Occupational Information Coordinating Committee)
<http://www.militarycareers.com/> (Military jobs and careers)
<http://www.ajb.dni.us/> (America's Job Bank)

Sites with information on Postsecondary Education, Vocational Schools, Colleges and Universities, Military Academies and Athletics

<http://www.cpec.ca.gov/> (California Postsecondary Education Commission)
<http://intergate.miramar.sdccd.cc.ca.us/> (Miramar College)
<http://intergate.sdmesa.sdccd.cc.ca.us/> (Mesa College)
<http://www.miracosta.cc.ca.us/> (MiraCosta College)
<http://www.csumentor.edu> (California State Universities)
<http://www.ucop.edu/pathways/> (University of California)
<http://www.hacu2000.org/> (Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities)
<http://www.webcom.com/~cjcook/SDBPPP/hbcu.html/> (Historically Black Colleges & Universities)
<http://www.usma.edu/> (U.S. Military Academy, West Point)
<http://usafa.af.mil/> (U.S. Air Force Academy, Colorado Springs)
<http://www.nadn.navy.mil> (U.S. Naval Academy, Annapolis)
<http://www.ncaa.org> (National Collegiate Athletic Association)

Sites with Information on College Testing Programs

<http://www.collegeboard.org> (SAT)

<http://www.act.org> (ACT)

<http://www.kaplan.com>

College and Scholarship Search Sites

<http://www.collegenet.com>

<http://www.embark.com>

<http://www.petersons.com>

<http://www.usnews.com>

<http://www.collegeboard.org>

<http://www.collegeview.com>

<http://www.collegenet.com>

<http://www.collegeparents.org>

<http://www.commonapp.org>

<http://www.collegeedge.com>

<http://www.campustours.com>

<http://www.CollegeIsPossible.org>

Sites with Information on Financial Aid

<http://www.fastweb.com> (The largest free list of scholarships on the web)

<http://www.ed.gov/> (U.S. Department of Education's home page)

<http://www.csac.ca.gov/> (California Student Aid Commissions' home page)

<http://www.finaid.org/> (Student Financial Aid Administrators)

<http://www.collegeboard.org> (College Board)

<http://www.salliemae.com> (Information on federally funded student loans)

<http://www.cashe.com> (Free Financial Aid Service)

